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A National Day of Prayer for Peace.

For weeks requests have been pouring into the White House asking President Wilson that a special day be set aside for prayer and supplication all over this country that peace may speedily be restored among the warring nations of Europe. On August 20 the Federal Council of Churches submitted a resolution asking the President to designate a "day of united prayer in all places of public worship and in the homes of the people to ask the Supreme Ruler to intervene in such ways as His divine wisdom may approve, so as to calm the hearts of those who are filled with passion for war, dispose their minds to listen to the counsels of humanity and accept overtures for peace, and bring speedily to their distracted and distressed peoples the blessings of peace." Early in September the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* started a similar movement, which met with hearty and ready response from persons of every rank and calling. A deputation representing every religious creed came to Washington with the memorial prepared at the instance of the *Ledger*. These are but two of the many evidences of the deep national sentiment supporting this call to prayer. Very large numbers of petitions to the same end have reached the President, and as a result of the widespread desire and of his own personal inclination he issued, on the 8th of September, the following call to united prayer:

"By the President of the United States of America.

"A PROCLAMATION.

"Whereas great nations of the world have taken up arms against one another, and war now draws millions of men into battle whom the counsel of statesmen have not been able to save from the terrible sacrifice; and

"Whereas in this as in all things, it is our privilege and duty to seek counsel and succor of Almighty God, humbling ourselves before Him, confessing our weakness and our lack of any wisdom equal to these things; and

"Whereas it is the especial wish and longing of the people of the United States, in prayer and counsel and all friendliness, to serve the cause of peace:

"Therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, do designate Sunday, the 4th day of October next, a day of prayer and supplication, and do request all God-fearing persons to repair on that day to their places of worship, there to unite their petitions to Almighty God, that, overruling the counsel of men, setting straight the things they cannot govern or alter, taking pity on the nations now in the throes of conflict, in His mercy and goodness showing a way where men can see none, He vouchsafe His children healing peace again and restore once more that concord among men and nations without which there can be neither happiness nor true friendship nor any wholesome fruit of toil or thought in the world; praying also to this end that He forgive us our sins, our

ignorance of His holy will, our wilfulness and many errors, and lead us in the paths of obedience to places of vision and to thoughts and counsels that purge and make wise.

"In witness whereof I hereunto set my hand and cause the seal of the United States to be affixed.

"Done at the city of Washington this 8th day of September in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, and of the independence of the United States of America the one hundred and thirty-ninth.

"WOODROW WILSON.

"By the President:

"WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN,
"Secretary of State."

The Obsession of Great Armaments.

The fact that the most terrible war in history is raging immediately after a period of hopeful progress in the peace movement has led many people to inquire whether the advocates of international conciliation have justified their labors, and has led some even to question the wisdom of the traditional policy of the United States not to maintain a large army in time of peace.

It is said that existing institutions intended to settle disputes without war have wholly failed, and must in any case fail to prevent such a war as this, and, therefore, the only safety of a nation is to arm herself against her day of trial.

That the Hague Tribunal has not prevented this war is obvious; that neither it nor any court or institution now in existence could have prevented it, if the nations concerned were determined to press claims, the legality of which they would not submit to any judgment but their own, is equally obvious. No intelligent person has ever argued or thought the contrary.

One of the main objects of the peace movement has been to establish international courts. But the mere existence of a court cannot prevent a war if nations are determined to fight; all that it can do is to offer a method of settling a dispute, if the nations will agree to that method. But nations will not so agree where their demands are unlawful and unjust, so that no court would uphold them.

No one has ever claimed that either the existing court of arbitration or the proposed court of arbitral justice would absolutely prevent war. But the one does, and the other will, *tend* to prevent it by offering an infinitely better means of settling *bona fide* disputes. The permanent court of arbitration did not fail to prevent this war because of any failure to do what it was designed to do, or could do, or what any intelligent person ever expected it to do.

The original dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia as to the responsibility for the murder of the Austrian Crown Prince might very properly have been submitted to the court, as Serbia suggested; but the Austrian demands went far beyond this question and could not have been supported by any rule of international law or practice. Therefore, for that as well as other reasons the suggestion of arbitration was ignored.

The other nations entered into the conflict, either because they believed their treaty obligations required

them to do so, or because they thought they saw some hope of benefit for themselves—not one because of any *bona fide* dispute with another which, under any conceivable circumstances, would or could have been submitted to a court.

Such wars cannot, in the nature of things, be prevented until there is a police force established by international agreement to prevent insupportable demands (when they will cease to be made) or until civilization has advanced to the point where the nations will cease to burden themselves with armaments which only serve as a pretext for hostilities and will support their demands by reason instead of by force.

There is, therefore, no ground whatever for questioning the value of international courts because they have not done what they were never intended to do and under no existing circumstances could do.

Such courts have done a great work, and they have yet a greater work to do. Their existence is necessary in order that disputes may be settled in some way other than by war, where negotiation has failed, and when they have been placed upon a sounder and more permanent basis the nations will turn to them more and more as a place where justice may be had, and this will lead the nations to ask justice only.

But we hear it further said that nations must arm themselves against such conflagrations as this which may even leap across the sea—that the United States must arm itself and be prepared.

But even a brief analysis of the existing situation shows that it was the huge armaments of the contending powers which provoked and brought on this war.

Germany is thought by many to have instigated this conflict. Would she have done so if she had not believed herself to have an invincible military engine?

Germany says that France and Great Britain and Russia plotted to destroy her, and she was forced to fight. If this be true, would there have been any plotting if these nations had not believed Germany was a menace to them by reason of her great military power? Would they have undertaken to destroy her because she excelled in art or science, or even in commerce? How could conquering her prevent her scientific men from continuing their researches or her merchants from sending their goods to the markets of the world?

And if England and France and Russia had not possessed great military and naval power, would they have plotted, if they did plot? Is it not as certain as any thing which depends largely on conjecture can be that the rivalry in armaments, the constant struggle to keep ahead of possible enemies, is the main, if not the only, cause of the breaking out of this terrible war? Fear, engendered by great military preparations on all sides, grew into an obsession until a powder mine was prepared which a spark exploded; and who remembers even now what that spark was? What are the questions at issue? Why are they fighting—killing and maiming hundreds of thousands of the best men of Europe? They are fighting for only one thing—to destroy each other's military power; and if they had not built up this power there would have been no war.

The mere increase of armament arouses suspicion that it is intended not for defense (as is always claimed), but for offense, and this stimulates like increases elsewhere and dread and dislike which soon grow into hate, and then—a war.

Nothing would be greater folly than for the United States to be drawn into this mad race for military supremacy—and there would be no surer way to invite attack from those who may fear our military preparations are intended for their hurt. It would do no nation any good to attack the United States, even if it could conquer us, and it is certain such a thing would never be contemplated or attempted unless from dread of an attack by us, inspired by military preparations having no apparent object. Our traditional policy has served us well, and without maintaining an army or an unduly powerful navy we have grown to be the equal, if not the superior, of any nation in prestige and influence, and in all that makes for true greatness, and are much safer from attack than if we had a great army and a military class constantly seeking for glory and to perpetuate its own occupation.

The lesson of great armaments has been, and will be, a terrible one; but this war may end for all time the struggle for armed supremacy. It is almost certain that as the war is being waged to destroy military power, one exaction of the conquerors will be to limit the military and naval power of the conquered, and from that it will be a natural step to limit their own power, and perhaps agree to act in concert to control any nation making unlawful demands on another.

Thus the world may soon follow the example set by the United States; but it would be incredible folly for us to fall into the error of the European nations and invite attack by preparation against imaginary enemies.

Editorial Notes.

President's Offer of Mediation.

On August 4 the President formally tendered the good offices of the United States Government to the nations of Europe which were engaged in the conflict, if they should at that or any future time desire to consider terms of peace. The messages were cabled to Emperor William, Emperor Nicholas, Emperor Francis Joseph, King George, and President Poincaré. Secretary Bryan also requested all the European diplomats in Washington to call at his office and receive copies of the message to be transmitted to their governments. In the case of countries not directly involved, this was done as a matter of information, and also in the hope that they would urge the acceptance of the offer of mediation. In due time replies were received from all the governments of the warring nations, but they were in the nature of formal acknowledgments merely. Secretary Bryan, in discussing the situation, said that it might be some time before the nations would be ready to listen to any idea of mediation, but that the United States had put itself on record as ready to render every assistance toward restoring peace at the earliest moment possible. The following is the text of the offer:

"As official head of one of the powers signatory to the Hague Convention, I feel it to be my privilege and my duty, under article 3 of that convention, to say to you in a spirit of most earnest friendship that I should welcome an opportunity to act in the interest of Euro-